



## Examining the Issues of Gender and Indigenous Knowledge in English Education Semester Courses

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### Abstract

Gender and indigenous knowledge (IK) are the contemporary cross-cutting issues to be addressed in the mainstream curriculum for enhancing inclusion and equity in higher education along with the recognition, preservation and promotion of indigenous knowledge. The issues of gender and IK are the cross-cutting subjects to be addressed in the contemporary educational discourses around the world including Nepal. Taking these issues into consideration, this study critically examined and analyzed the issues of addressing gender and integrating IK into the Master of English Education courses of Tribhuvan University (TU), Nepal, along with the pedagogical practices, assessment and research. Framing on indigenous perspective with social justice, cultural capital, classroom ecology and linguicism as the theoretical lenses, this study applied qualitative study of contents analysis and open-ended questions with the teachers from TU. The study found that the course content was not much inclusive in terms of gender and indigenous knowledge. However, pedagogical practices, assessment system and research were gender and indigenous friendly as responded by the participants. Its implication is that the Master of English Education courses of Nepal's TU needs to address the issues of gender and indigenous knowledge for equity, inclusion and recognition of indigenous knowledge for the glocal context.

**Keywords:** cross-cutting issues, gender, indigenous knowledge

## A. Introduction

The integration of gender and indigenous knowledge (IK) in the mainstream curriculum is a cross-cutting issue to be addressed for enhancing inclusion and equity in higher education. The issues of gender and IK are the multi-dimensional and multi-faceted cross-cutting subjects in the contemporary educational discourses (Bhandari, 2020b; Gautam, 2020). Here, gender is taken in the sense of being friendly with the females in relation to the inclusion of female writers, the use of language, involvement of girls in classroom teaching learning activities and research work; and indigenous knowledge is taken in the sense of using native texts in the courses, localizing the teaching activities and prioritizing the local issues in assignments including research. Therefore, these issues are to be addressed for the proper balance in contents along with the pedagogical practices in the classroom contexts with awareness and conscious strategies by the educators. The teacher educators are required to embed the issues of gender and indigenous perspectives “in order to promote understanding and mutual respect” (Baynes, 2015, p.80) between different members of the multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual heterogeneous society.

Being a multiethnic country with 125 ethnic groups of people speaking 129 mother tongues (Language Commission, 2019), Nepal is rich enough in terms of IK, which is the part of Nepal's heritage. Nepal's identity lies in its cultural heritage and IK is in fact ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986) of the country. Moreover, the issue of gender has been interrelated with Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (McCall, 1992; Laberge, 1995). So, gender and IK have cultural values as they can be taken as cultural capital in the diverse society. These issues need to be addressed to preserve the cultural diversity and promote the heritage of IK taking it as the asset of the society in a multiethnic and multilingual society like Nepal. It is the responsibility of the educators to value, respect, promote and preserve the local organic knowledge thereby trying to circulate it in the global arena. The best way to do so is to keep it in the mainstream curriculum of the country so that the young generation becomes aware of it and have the feeling of ownedness and pride.

Indigenous knowledge system is embodied in the forms of “all aspects of life including ecology, climate, agriculture, animal husbandry, botany, linguistics, medicine, clinical-psychology and craft skills” (Mapira & Mazambara, 2013, p.91). All the traditions, practices, beliefs, artifacts, languages, farming systems, etc. are the examples of indigenous knowledge system, and it is necessary to protect, promote and share them to maintain identities of the various social groups. Cultural heritage and diversity are linked to biodiversity and from an ecological point of view, all these need to be conserved to preserve biodiversity and environmental preservation. Without the practice and preservation of IK, identity of the ethnic group is lost. The word ‘indigenous’ often refers to specific groups of people defined by ancestral territories, collective cultural configuration, and historical locations (Turay, 2002; Angioni, 2003). In this regard, Owuor (2007) defines that “indigenous knowledge is a multifaceted body of knowledge, practices, and representations that are maintained and developed by peoples with long histories of close interaction with the local natural environment” (p.23), and the indigenous education aims at placing knowledge within the context of the user (Dei, Hall & Rosenberg, 2002). So it is necessary to include indigenous knowledge and perspectives in classroom practice for social justice, equity, student engagement and participation, and identity.

Being a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual country with diverse landscape, integration of IK into the mainstream curriculum along with addressing the issue of gender helps bring justice and equality to people in Nepal. Therefore, this analysis is considered to be quite significant as it will help to subordinate localism through the integration of IK (Angioni, 2003) in the English curriculum. As the classroom ecology consists of both males and females, it will also help to bring equality between both genders. As such, curriculum designers and teacher educators will be benefitted for considering these issues to make the course gender and ecology friendly.

Regarding inclusive education, gender, equality, equity, and identity, the policy makers, language planners and implementers have realized the need for addressing the issues of gender

and integrating indigenous knowledge for the preservation and promotion of local knowledge in the mainstream courses of education. In this scenario, this study examined and analyzed the cross-cutting issues of gender and IK in the Master of Education (M.Ed.) English courses of TU in relation to contents, pedagogical practices, assignment, research areas and process as reflected by Bhandari (2020a) in higher education in general and in English education courses in particular. Since there has been no research in this area in Nepal, it can be a fruitful piece of study to examine the incorporation of gender and IK in relation to the M.Ed. English courses of TU along with its implementation.

## B. Literature Review

English has been being taught in education at Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and M.Ed. levels at TU, Nepal to produce the qualified and trained teachers of teaching English as a foreign language (ELF) in Nepal since 1956 with the establishment of college of education. The courses of M.Ed. English education are especially for producing the English teachers as the English subject teaching manpower for the country.

Under the gender and indigenous paradigms with critical perspective applying the frameworks of justice, cultural capital, classroom ecology and linguisticism as the theoretical lenses, this paper critically analyses the issues of addressing gender and integrating IK into the M.Ed. English courses of TU. Indigenous paradigm takes the perspective about local indigenous cultures and knowledge. "Indigenous knowledge is the local knowledge – knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society" Warren, 1991, n.p.). Fraser's (1999, 2005) theory of social justice deals with the matters of justice in education reflecting equity, policy and practice of schooling (Keddie, 2012). Out of Fraser's tripartite recognition-distribution- representation paradigm of social justice, this article makes use of the recognition and representation paradigms of justice. The justice of recognition means respecting the cultures, knowledge and values of all groups in the curriculum, school and classroom. The justice of representation in education has to do with the inclusion of groups in decision making and other activities. Not valuing the proper balance of gender in the M.Ed. courses is injustice. All the values, norms, beliefs, practices and traditions are the cultural capitals (Bourdieu, 1986) that need to be preserved and promoted to sustain diversity and maintain ecology. The 'classroom ecology' (Doyle, 1977; Tudor, 2001) "focuses on mutual relations among environmental demands and human responses in natural classroom settings" (Doyle, 1977, p.176). Classroom environment is an active force in affective behaviour and the classroom activities influence learning of the students. The ecology of the language classroom consists of the teacher, students, processes, structures, and classroom materials (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013). The proper balancing among them makes teaching and learning effective and purposeful. The concept of linguisticism was propounded by the linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1988), who defines it as "ideologies and structures which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources between groups which are defined on the basis of language" (p 13). Not prioritizing the local languages in assignments and research work can be taken in the sense of linguisticism in this study.

Although some studies have been conducted in relation to the integration of indigenous knowledge in the school level curriculum (Owuor, 2007; Phiri, 2008; Khupe, 2014; Abah, Mashebe, & Denuga, 2015; Baynes, 2015), to our knowledge, there has been no any study regarding the examination of gender and IK incorporation at the master's level courses in English education. Therefore, this study tries to fulfill this gap and it will be significant for designing gender and IK friendly courses for the universities, especially to Nepalese universities.

## C. Methodology

### 1. Research Design

Based on gender and indigenous paradigm as the philosophical underpinnings, this study employed the qualitative content analysis to examine the issue of incorporating gender and IK in the contents of the M.Ed. English courses, and then examined the practices of pedagogy,

assignments and research work in relation to gender and IK by applying our own experiences of teaching at M.Ed. and the open-ended interview questions with the teachers who had been teaching the courses at TU. We conducted interviews to explore how the classroom implementers (here the teachers) of the courses viewed about the prescribed texts, and how they have been practising these courses in the teaching activities, assignments and research related tasks. The course contents of M.Ed. English were the main tools as documents analysis along with our experiences in implementing them in the classroom and the data obtained from the open-ended questions.

## *2. Participants and Sample*

Five university teachers with the teaching experiences of more than ten years were asked to respond the open-ended questions through e-mail. The criterion of inclusiveness was adopted to gain the inclusive views of the respondents about the course contents and their teaching experiences and practices at M.Ed. Out of the five teachers, two were females, one was from Janajati (ethnic) group, one from Brahmin group and one from Chettri group including from both affiliated and constituent campuses of TU. In addition, the views of the participants in the workshops organized by Central Department of Education, TU, on gender and IK in higher education have also been collected and analyzed.

## *3. Instruments, and Data Collection and Analysis Procedures*

The courses of M.Ed. English were analyzed while the answers of the open-ended questionnaire were used as the supporting data for the themes under analysis. The open-ended questions were validated by showing to the experts.

The open-ended questions included 11 questions. The first question was just about asking their years of experience of teaching at M.Ed. level English course; the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth number questions were related to contents; the seventh and ninth number questions were about teaching; the eighth number question was related to assignments; and the remaining two questions were related to research work (see APPENDIX).

The open-ended questions were emailed to the teachers to seek the answers in a written form. The answers were used as the data for thematic analysis and discussion of the study.

## **D. Findings and Discussion**

Incorporation of gender and IK is the cross-cutting issue in the globalized world for inclusion, equity, equality, and justice to the local peoples' values, norms, and practices. It is essential that there needs to be the proper balance of female writers' texts including native ones to be addressed by the mainstream curriculum of the universities in Nepal. In this scenario, this paper aimed at examining and critically analyzing the issues of addressing gender and incorporating IK in relation to contents, pedagogy, assignments and research at M.Ed. English curriculum of TU Nepal through gender equality and indigenous paradigm perspectives. So the following section deals with these four themes of discussion.

### *1. Examining the Course Contents of M.Ed. English*

The Faculty of Education has been implementing semester system at master's level since 2013. Master of English Education is a four-semester course of TU conducted by Faculty of Education with 66 credit hours in total with the aim of producing qualified and competent English teachers and teacher educators. 48 teaching hours are allocated for 3 credit hours and 80% attendance is compulsory to take the final examination. The course consists of two practical courses namely thesis writing and teaching practice at the fourth semester.

The subject matter is delivered to the students through the contents prescribed in the syllabus. All the teaching learning activities are centered around the contents of the syllabus. The course of M.Ed. English at TU consists of 14 contents subjects namely Phonetics and Phonology; English Usage and Use; Interdisciplinary Readings; Second Language Acquisition Theories and Research; Linguistics in Application; Language, Society and Power; Critical



Discourse Analysis; Readings in English Part-I; English Language Teaching Pedagogy and Materials; Readings in Literary Genres; Dimensions of Teacher Development; ELT Research and Testing; Translation Studies; and ELT Seminar and Report Writing. Among them, the last two are elective courses as the students can choose any one subject out of the two at the fourth semester. Apart from them, there are two practical courses: Teaching Practice and Thesis Writing. Teaching practice is the application of the theory in the classroom to be competent in teaching by showing the performance whereas thesis writing is for developing academic skills by investigating any issue through writing. The course 'ELT Seminar and Report Writing' is for developing presentation skill and report writing as an academic writing development.

Most of the courses are about English language and language related subjects including theoretical courses about teaching, materials and testing. However, there are three courses 'Interdisciplinary Readings', 'Readings in English Part-I' and 'Readings in Literary Genres' which incorporate different literary texts from around the world.

The course 'Interdisciplinary Readings' includes 9 reading texts from Nepal namely 'You can create when your heart longs for singing' by Govinda Raj Bhattarai, 'Joys that sprouted with letters' by Jhamak Ghimire, 'Atmabritanta: Late life recollections' by BP Koirala, 'Politics, Education and The Labor Pains of Linguistics in Nepal' by Kamal Praksh Malla, 'Preservation of indigenous language through translation' by Bal Ram Adhikari, 'Is Nepal small' by Laxmi Prasad Devkota, 'I am the Nepali' by CK Lal, 'A letter from Gautam Buddha to Ashoka' by Krishna Chandra Singh Pradhan and 'The Postmodern: Problem with prefixation' by Uday Narayan Singh out of 30 texts. In fact, this course values IK and texts from Nepal. Respecting native literature is a good practice at university. However, there is only one texts by a female writer from Nepal and only one text by an ethnic group. Similarly, there are only two more texts by female writers namely 'Three Days to See' by Hellen Keller and 'Equal rights for Women' by Shirley Chisholm. The course includes 30% texts from Nepal and only 10% by female writers. So this course is not much following equity from the perspective of gender though it respects native reading texts to some extent.

Another course is 'Readings in English Part-I.' This course includes altogether 55 reading texts across the world. But there is only one text from Nepal 'Education is Not Filling of Pail But Lighting of a Fire' by G. R. Bhattarai. It covers only nearly 2% texts from Nepal. So this course is integrating knowledge to a limited extent only. Similarly, the course includes only five texts by female writers namely 'Phenomenal Woman' by Maya Angelou, 'What there is to See at the Zoo' by Marianne More, 'The Beautiful and the Ugly' by Aung San Suu Kyi, 'Martin Luther King's Famous Speech' by Indira Gandhi and 'To Cambridge's Women' by Virginia Woolf. It covers only 9% texts by female writers. So from the gender perspective, this course is also not much inclusive.

Another course is 'Readings in Literary Genres' which includes altogether 34 literary reading texts including poems, stories, essays and drama. It totally neglects reading texts from Nepal as there is not even a single text by any Nepali literary figure. Regarding gender perspective, the course includes four reading texts namely 'Lullaby' by Leslie Marmon Silko, 'I am Nobody, Who are You?' by Emily Dickinson, 'Patterns' by Amy Lowell and 'The Rising of the Moon' by Lady Gregory, covering approximately 12% of the total texts.

While examining the three courses of M.Ed. English, which include different reading texts by various writers around the world, it is evident that they are only addressing the issues of gender and indigenous knowledge to a limited extent. From the point of view of justice and indigenous paradigm, they are not considerate to the issues of gender and IK. If we do not respect our native culture, ethnicity, products and knowledge, then how can we preserve and promote our native knowledge? Who is responsible to preserve and promote our knowledge and whose interest are we fulfilling? Or are there no sufficient literary texts produced by the Nepalese literary figures? This is a serious issue to be addressed if we want to follow the principles of equity, equality and inclusiveness for the promotion of local knowledge. Moreover, the issue of gender is not addressed much as there are many literary writers now around the world including Nepal.

Cazden (2012) views that "educational justice would require recognition and inclusion in the school curriculum of the histories, cultures, and knowledge" (p.182) of the country and the students. But the debatable thing is that indigenous histories, cultures and knowledge have not

been adequately recognized in the curriculum contents of M.Ed. English of TU, Nepal. From the social justice point of view as proposed by Fraser (1999, 2005), there is the injustice of recognition or misrecognition of IK in the courses as the course includes only a few texts from the native context.

As noted by Bhandari (2020), the participants in the regional webinar on gender and IK reflected that the courses of English education did not include sufficient topics on indigenous knowledge and gender issues. They demanded such issues to be included in the courses and insisted on including the texts by local writers, and maintain the gender balance as a principle, not based on the courses (Bhandari, 2020).

Question number two, three, four, five and six were asked in relation to the contents of M.Ed. English courses regarding the issues of gender and IK. Responding the second question, all five teachers agreed that incorporating local/indigenous knowledge is quite relevant and useful to include in the courses of English as a foreign language. T1 expressed that IK helps to build a strongly connected grassroots level platform for M.Ed. students while T2 viewed that it is our identity. However, T4 viewed, "...it would be better to select some interdisciplinary materials from multiple cultures and multiple nations." Yes, interdisciplinary texts bring variety and diversity in terms of cultures and countries. Therefore, it is good to do so for inclusiveness.

Regarding the equal number of male and female writers' texts in the curriculum, four teachers viewed that contents matter more than the writers. However, T1 expressed to be equal number of male and female writers' texts to maintain equity in the courses. T4 said it was a political kind of question arguing that university course is not the hotchpotch of the texts; the subject matter of the text and the contribution of the author has to be considered. The male teachers viewed that it is not necessary to consider the gender of the author while selecting a book for a course in response to the question number four. However, the female T2 viewed that maximum variation would lead to a representative sample of texts while another female T3 viewed gender of the author needs to be considered in some cases for gender equality. In fact, she argued from the feminist perspective.

Concerning the response of question number five, the participants responded that the present courses under semester system are gender and indigenous friendly to some extent only. As they perceived, this is a good beginning and it needs to be taken into consideration in the future courses. Regarding how the courses can be made gender and IK friendly, T1 (ethnic group) male), T3 (female) and T5 (Brahmin male) responded:

*T1: ...by including contents related to things and events of high importance in localities described and interpreted in English language...*

*T3: ...more contents can be included regarding these issues, such as, gender inequalities, injustices, oppression and major contributions of female and of different cultural groups in societal and human life*

*T5: ... issues related to men, women and the third gender should be included in the textbook...every effort should be made to incorporate local life useful knowledge into the textbook...*

Their views are quite relevant in that they address the recognition perspective of Fraser's (2005) social justice theory. Although the courses incorporate some texts by female writers and from Nepalese writers, they are not enough to address the issues of gender and IK from the perspectives of equality, equity and justice. In fact, texts related to various cultures, ethnicity and knowledge of localities can be taken as cultural capital in the sense of Bourdieu (1986), and it is the responsibility of the educators to preserve, promote and transform them for the identity and recognition of IK. If the educators, policy makers and course designers do not address these issues, then who will address and how can the native identity be maintained?

## *2. Pedagogical Practices*

The contents of the course are delivered by the teachers through pedagogical practices in the classroom. The issue is that pedagogical practices should be gender friendly and the language used needs to be gender unbiased. However, due to our mindset and stereotypical

structures, the use of language tends to be gender biased in some cases despite the fact that we tend to be cautious while speaking in the classroom. Our experience has shown this fact. The classroom ecology is composed of teacher, students, activities, contents and materials. The interaction between the teacher and the students with active participation of all students irrespective of gender and ethnicity makes teaching learning fruitful, effective and purposeful as it addresses inclusiveness and equality respecting minoritized and disadvantaged groups of the learners.

In relation to introducing gender perspective in education, Bhandari (2020a) and Acharya (2020) argued that it is necessary to present examples and practices that promote equality between men and women in all spheres. Acharya (2020) has quoted this data to show that there needs to be equality to be gender friendly in classroom pedagogy: "Sir always gave example of women-women do this women do that. I raised this issue and said that men also do this and that why do you always use women as example. Whole class laughed." As this data indicates, it is necessary to use balanced examples if any in case of gender issues as the classroom ecology consists of diverse students in terms of genes, culture, language, and ethnicity.

Concerning the pedagogical practices, the respondents were asked the question "How can the issues of gender and indigenous knowledge be addressed in teaching and learning in the classroom even if not given in the syllabus?" (Q. 7), and all of them expressed their experiences of teaching in the classroom with activities and behaviours of gender and IK friendly. T 2 mentioned that she tried her best to care for all her students without seeing them in terms of their gender and class. Here it seems relevant to quote T1, T2, T4 and T4:

*T1: I love to give examples of relevant rituals, social issues, cultural beliefs, and socio-cultural elements of the local scenarios...*

*T2: ...respect everyone's feelings, be cautious in using the language that might hurt our students, and inspire their efforts...To promote indigenous knowledge, we should encourage students to conduct meaningful research in this area*

*T3: ...treating all the differences (of students) in terms of sex, language, ethnic backgrounds, cultures and so on with equal respect and by creating a context for group discussion on these issues, etc.*

*T5: I use the principle of replacing to address the issues of gender and indigenous knowledge in the assignment process.... For example, I ask students to write about the biography of Prem Dev Giri after teaching the text 'Wah, wah, Face to Face with Bismillah Khan'.*

As their practices reflect, they are used to be much more gender and IK friendly in their pedagogical activities in the classroom. From the classroom ecological perspective, they are doing their best and doing social justice what Fraser (2005) proposed to be the representative paradigm of social justice. In fact, teachers are the change agents and the responsible people to do justice for all in the classroom and treat students behaving that their feelings, opinions, cultures, gender and knowledge have equal value.

In response to the question, "Do you relate local knowledge while teaching an English course?" (Q.9), all the participants agreed that they do. In this connection, T1, T2 and T5 are relevant to quote:

*T1: ...I teach the topics on Phonetics and Phonology by relating pronunciation of specific sounds of students' mother tongue or local languages with that of the sounds of English.*

*T2: ...while teaching the text, "Women's rights are human rights," I used to engage students in a discussion about the situation of women's rights in Nepal.*

*T5: ...while teaching the text 'Joys that Sprouted with Letters' I never talk only about Jhamak Kumari Ghimire, I also talk about Premprakash Malla and the women who have lived a life of struggle at the local levels.*

As expressed, T1 often tried to relate the sounds of student's mother tongues while teaching the course 'Phonetics and Phonology' which is quite appreciable. T2 tried to relate things to the local relevant context as in the case of 'Women's rights are human rights.' Similarly, T5 linked

the text with the local context. From the examples and teaching experiences they mentioned, it is clear that the teachers at the university level try to relate local knowledge while teaching a text in English courses at M.Ed. English. This is quite a good practice to respect, recognize and acknowledge the local context while teaching English. They are doing justice in the sense of Fraser (2005).

As teachers are the responsible people to transmit policy intent and course content to the students (Shrestha & Khanal, 2016), they need to be aware of multicultural contexts so that pedagogical practices can be culturally relevant. Gay (2010) describes culturally responsive teaching as comprehensive, empowering, transformative, and emancipator; and it focuses on students' academic achievement and critical social awareness. In this context, Shrestha and Khanal (2016) suggest for indigenized teaching and learning practices in higher education especially in relation to Nepal. Only the pedagogical practices based on interculturality can preserve cultural diversity in the multicultural context.

### 3. Assignments

The semester course has the provision of giving assignments and involving the students to the teaching learning activities like presentation and writing term papers. The issue is whether assignments are related to indigenous knowledge or not and whether there is active participation of both male and female students in the presentation and activities or not. Most of the participants shared their experiences that male students are more active than female students in doing the assignments and taking part in presentation activities (NORHED QUANTICT Project workshop, 2020). In the first semester, while there was the turn for student presentation, female students said that they would present later asking boys to present first. Similarly, in the cases of writing term papers, boys were forward and more curious to know more as they used to ask by phone calls or emails how to do and what materials to consult to improve their academic writing tasks. But in case of regularity, female students tended to be more regular.

The evaluation scheme of the course consists of both internal and external evaluation. The external evaluation is the final examination covering the remaining 60%, conducted by Examination Division Office of the Dean, Faculty of Education at the end of the semester. As the semester courses demand 40% internal evaluation, it is necessary to examine how the teachers address the issues of gender and IK in the assignments. In this regard, the participants responded the question, "How can the issues of gender and indigenous knowledge be addressed in the assignment processes even if not given *in the course*?" (Q. 8):

T1: ... *by formulating project works for students to involve them in investigating...issues of gender...Linguicism...can be eliminated only by giving equal importance to indigenous knowledge.*

T2: *We can personalize the assignments and provide them with choices. ...For example, in Critical Discourse Analysis, we can ask students to examine texts related to gender and indigenous knowledge critically.*

T3: *Students can be asked to write and present on the topic related to their own cultural events (informative), problems and challenges faced by them in society and institutions only because of their different sex, languages, and cultures....*

T4: *...encourage our students to focus on the issues of gender and indigenous group at local level and come up with the genuine issues of the same.*

As T1, T2, T3 and T4 responded, the issues of gender and IK can be addressed with certain strategies. T1 suggested project works and equal importance to IK against linguistic discrimination as viewed by the linguist Skutnabb-Kangas (1988). It is justice to have equal treatment to all the languages of the students in the classroom. T2 emphasized on personalizing the assignments based on choices as she exemplified that the related course text could be examined related to gender and IK. T3 viewed writing on topics related to their own cultures, sex and languages. T4 also emphasized encouraging the students focusing on gender and IK related issues at the local level. Whatever ways these teachers have suggested and used are quite just from the perspective of Fraser's point of view of justice, and also in line with the



classroom and language ecological perspectives. The fair treatment of the students languages, cultures, gender, and IK can be a good practice of assignments at the master's level. As can be inferred from the views of the respondents, the issues of assignment process is quite gender and IK friendly and glocalized.

### 3. Research Related Issues

The M.Ed. English courses include writing related tasks as term papers along with the final year thesis writing. Such writing tasks can incorporate the issues of gender and indigenous knowledge with the exploration of local knowledge related to the reading texts and contents learned in the course. Gender issues like girls' interest in taking English as the specialization subject, struggles of girls in learning English, relative performance of girls and boys in English, etc. can be the topics for exploration in writing term papers or thesis. Similarly, local indigenous knowledge can be the topics for exploration like the sounds of different indigenous languages of the country, folk literature, developing grammar of indigenous languages, etc. From our experiences, such issues are often unexplored.

Regarding research, Acharya (2020) argued that gender balance in participant selection, gender disaggregated data/information, gender perspective in data analysis is necessary. In this context, all the participants agreed that they were aware of the research (theses) on gender issues, local languages and culture (Q. 10). However, T5 responded:

*T5: I am aware not in gender and culture but in local languages. For example, I have asked the M.Ed. students to write thesis about the locally spoken Rana, Tharu and Urdu languages.*

As T5 responded that he does not gender and culture but on local languages about writing theses. Nepal is a linguistically diverse country as 129 languages as mother tongues (Language Commission, 2019) are spoken in the country. Valuing all these languages at the local level and researching about them can be the recognition justice (Fraser, 2005). "Nepal's linguistic diversity can be seen with cultural diversity closely linked to biodiversity of the country" (Saud, 2020, p. 321). As such, the recognition of all the languages through research can help maintain biodiversity as well. Thus, it is necessary to recognize, preserve and promote the local languages through research.

Responding to the ways of addressing the issues of gender and IK in writing assignments, seminar paper and thesis, T1 emphasized involving students on different topics relating to issues of gender and indigenous knowledge, running workshops, panel discussions, and collaborative practices. T2 expressed that teachers should be better prepared to lead students in the direction of the issues of gender and IK. T3 focused on reflective writing and sharing with friends conducting seminars while T5 viewed that students should be asked to write thesis based on various skills and aspects of the locally spoken languages. Thus, the respondents reflected on addressing the issues of gender and IK in terms of writing seminar papers and theses. Again from the perspective of social justice, particularly the recognition justice (Fraser, 2005), it is a good practice to be done to recognize, preserve and promote the local knowledge.

### E. Conclusion

This study has examined and analyzed the issues of gender and indigenous knowledge in relation to M.Ed. English courses of TU, Nepal. It is necessary that the issue of gender be addressed for equality and justice, and indigenous knowledge be incorporated in the mainstream curriculum and its implementation phase for the preservation and promotion of local indigenous knowledge maintaining identity of the peoples in the country. Researching in the areas of indigenous languages and culture through English as a foreign language will maintain identity.

As the examination and analysis of the curriculum has shown, the courses have addressed the authorship and the issues of gender and IK, maintaining the balance is still an issue. The teaching learning practices, assessment systems and researching are gradually becoming gender and IK friendly as the respondents expressed that they were trying to relate the contents and texts to the local contexts as far as possible. Its implication is that the policy makers and course designers of TU, Nepal need to incorporate the IK valuing native cultures, and address

the issue of gender by incorporating female writers' texts around the world with variety. Exploring the policy makers and the course designers' perspectives about the issue of incorporating IK to the English curriculum and courses of TU can be a further direction of research.

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